

Presentation – History of the education of the body: research for a developing notion¹

Apresentação – História da educação do corpo: pesquisas para uma noção em construção

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ABSTRACT

Since the 1980s, the body is being consolidated as an object of study in humanities, including history, especially among those adept at cultural history. The debates generated by the so-called “corporeal turn” echoed powerfully in areas like the history of education and the history of physical education, sports, and amusements. This scholarship has focused on issues like the different practices and prescriptions developed in modern Western societies to educate the body. The notion of education of the body has been used by numerous scholarship programs, allowing new interrogations over various research objects, such as handbooks on gymnastics and sports, handbooks on painting, curricula of teacher training programs, or even outdoor games and amusements. This introductory text briefly discusses this incorporation of the body as an object of study in the history of education, sports, and amusements, indicating its consolidation process and potentials for these areas.

Keywords: History. Body. Education.

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RESUMO

Desde os anos 1980, o corpo vem se consolidando como um objeto de estudo das ciências humanas, inclusive da história, entre os adeptos da história cultural. As discussões geradas pelo chamado “giro corporal” ecoaram especialmente em áreas como a história da educação e história da educação física, do esporte e dos divertimentos, que direcionaram suas atenções para questões sobre como diferentes práticas e prescrições se desenvolveram, na sociedade ocidental moderna, com a finalidade de educar o corpo. A noção de educação do corpo, mobilizada em diferentes investigações, tem permitido novas interrogações sobre os mais diversos objetos de pesquisa, como manuais de ginástica e esporte, manuais de pintura, currículos de formação docente, ou mesmo os jogos e divertimentos ao ar livre. Neste texto introdutório, discutimos brevemente esta incorporação do corpo como objeto de estudos da história da educação, do esporte e dos divertimentos, indicando seu processo de consolidação e potencialidades para estes campos.

Palavras-chave: História. Corpo. Educação.

The body has become a research object that extrapolated the limits of natural sciences, entering the field of humanities and, consequently, the realm of history. According to Clever and Ruberg (2014), the “corporeal turn” that had taken place in sociology and in feminist philosophy contributed to consolidate the body as a research object in human sciences during the 1980s and the 1990s. This turn also happened in history, where these ideas were widely received, especially among the cultural history adepts.

However, this interest in the body can be traced back to the beginning of the twentieth century. Le Goff and Truong (2015) recall that this interest started with historians connected to Annales School, mainly Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch. Bloch affirmed that “for too long, history was deprived of its body, its flesh, its entrails, its happiness, and miseries. Therefore, it is necessary to provide history with a body. And to provide the body with a history” (LE GOFF; TRUONG, 2015, p.10). According to Le Goff and Truong (2015), the conception of body, its presence in social imaginary, and daily life underwent modifications in all societies. Therefore, writing a history of the body is writing a history of oblivion.

Various authors from social sciences have contributed to the consolidation of these “adventures of the body” throughout the twentieth century. In addition to the previously mentioned Lucien Febvre and Marc Bloch, other authors can be highlighted in this process, like French anthropologist Marcel Mauss, German sociologist Norbert Elias, German philosophers Theodor Adorno and

Max Horkheimer, and French philosopher Michel Foucault. There seems to be a consensus that especially Elias's work on the civilizing process and Foucault's work were vital in this process of turning the body into a research object of humanities (CLEVER; RUBERG, 2014; COOTER, 2010; GALÁN TAMÉS, 2009; SANT'ANNA, 1993). These authors contributed to give subjects like bodily techniques, body functions, and repression and control mechanisms a prominent place in historiographic and sociological research. Later, historians like Georges Duby, Paul Veyne and Jacques Le Goff also paid attention to a history of the body.

This consolidation of the body as a research object in humanities is recent, gaining strength especially from the two last decades of the twentieth century on. In a text originally published in 1991, Roy Porter pointed to the need to “look at the body as it has been experienced and expressed within particular cultural systems, both private and public, which themselves have changed over time” (PORTER, 1991, p. 208). At that time, the author warned us that the history of the body could not be limited to thinking about its representations or statistics about physics. According to Porter, thinking the history of the body would be “a call to make sense of the interplay between the two” (PORTER, 1991, p. 211). Revisiting that paper twenty years later, this author maintained his standpoint that a history of the body should pay attention to the interrelations between representations and physical aspects. Analyzing the scholarship on this subject, Porter points to the need to keep the history of the body from becoming “reduced to tracing yet more ways in which the body has been surveyed, normalized, disciplined, policed and punished” (PORTER, 2001, p. 237).

Clever and Ruberg (2014, p. 550) make a similar observation, stating that “in the past 20 years, social and discursive constructionist approaches to the body have been very influential, but have also come under attack, due to their presumed lack of attention to individual corporeal experience”. Coorter (2010) shares this concern with a potentially excessive emphasis on discourses and representations about the body. This author points out that, by understanding the body exclusively as a representation, some studies on the field transform it solely into a “discursive act”, leaving behind its materiality. In this sense, these authors point to the need to think not only of the representations of the body but also the practices that have an effect on it.

Several authors have been dedicating efforts to reflecting on these issues. The variety of publications approaching the numerous practices and representations of the body are an evidence of the consolidation of this subject in the field of history. An example is the collection *Histoire du corps*, organized by historians Alain Corbin, Jean-Jacques Courtine, and Georges Vigarello, and published in 2005. These authors, accompanied by Jean-Claude Schmitt,

Jacques Revel, have constituted the theoretical framework for Brazilian and South American researchers investigating issues related to the history of the body and, more specifically, the processes that educate it.

Soares (2001) indicates that all its surrounding reality educates the body. The author shows that the education of the body is a polysemic phenomenon, conditioned by a series of scientific and pedagogical prescriptions. After all, the education of the body “(...) happens not only through words but through gazes, gestures, things, by the place they live in” (SOARES, 2001, p. 110). In this sense, different pedagogies were established aiming at different goals, mainly those related to education and health.

In this sense, the notion of education of the body formalised by Soares (2014) indicates that the progressive repression of corporeal manifestations characterizes this process, making the body fit for social coexistence and introducing it to a series of education processes that aim to cover and erase its rebellious nature. The author highlights that the body needs to be educated to be exhibited. These pedagogical actions range multiple paths, generating practices that are sometimes contradictory, ambiguous, and tense, often configuring forms of containment of the pulsions.

In Brazil, like in some South American countries, the notion of education of the body has been used systematically and polysemically in the field of education over the last years, mainly in historiographic research. It is also used in the field of physical education (initial area of study of both organizers of this special issue), where debates on this subject are growing and deepening. A significant number of authors in the field have been using notions, concepts, and ideas that address these issues. Thus, the numerous academic and scientific forums show the growth of scholarship focusing on these matters, resulting in publications, dissertations, and thesis about the history of the body or how institutions, practices, and several dispositives have socially and culturally educated bodies.

Varied empirical materials have been used as historical sources by researchers. On the one hand, over the past thirty years, most scholars have focused on this inexhaustible subject². On the other hand, more recently (over the past decade), there is a perceptible emergence of new questions, generated by

² The works of Carvalho and Correia (2015); Cunha (2017); Goellner (1992); Góis Júnior (2013, 2015); Jubé (2017); Melo and Peres (2014); Melo (2016); Moraes e Silva and Quitzau (2018); Moreno (2001, 2003, 2015, 2016); Naiman, Furtado and Moraes e Silva (2020); Puchta (2015); Quitzau (2014, 2015, 2016); Quitzau and Soares (2016) and Soares (2000, 2004, 2015) are revealing of these interests. Abroad we can mention the research of Andrieu (1988,1999); Bui-Xuân e Gleyse (2001); Ljunggren (2011); Lundvall (2015); Rodríguez Giménez (2011); Sarremejane (2006); Scharagrodsky (2011).

the interchange with several other fields, like Education, History, Anthropology, Arts, among others. This fruitful dialogue has been generating numerous news questions and hypotheses beyond those that already permeate the field, fostering the possibility of telling stories that haven't yet been told. In this sense, we highlight the spaces dedicated to debate the history of physical education, sports, and amusements, where there is a clear problematization of the field.

What does this special issue reveal? That from schools to circus, from gymnastics manuals to comics, there were multiple attempts to educate people's bodies, especially those of children and youth. This multiplicity is reflected in the 14 papers selected to compose this special issue, which counts with contributions from authors from different areas of Brazil, as well as Argentinian, French and Uruguayan researchers. The selected papers look at the education of the body using several sources, timeframes, and institutions, sometimes pointing to these processes as disciplinary tools, sometimes showing how they were permeated by moments of joy and amusement.

In the opening paper, *Education of the body: notes for the historicity of a notion*, Carmen Lúcia Soares demonstrates how, in a long duration, different individuals and institutions intended to affect educational processes aiming to intervene on the body, its gestures, and appearances. To do so, she uses a varied set of sources produced in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, allowing to see how different representations of the body and ways to intervene on it were constituted in Western societies. Many of these precepts studied by Soares were widely diffused in handbooks of morals and hygiene. These are the main object of study taken by Jacques Gleyse and Avelino Aldo de Lima Neto in the paper *A gendered "corporal" morality in french school textbooks on morality and hygiene (1880-1974)*. The authors focus on school textbooks on morals and hygiene published in France at the turn of the nineteenth century, analyzing how these works contributed to developing a "gendered" moral, based on specific prescriptions about the expected bodies and behaviors from boys and girls. We could say that this gendered moral, to a certain extent, remains in France throughout the twentieth century. Based on French specialized journals, in *Masculine Identities, Body language and Physical Education in France between 1967 et 1985*), Jean Saint-Martin and Nicolas Iffrig indicate the conflicts between hegemonic sports and new proposals favoring an education through corporal expression. These conflicts placed the representation of masculine identity in the center of the dispute in the French educational context.

This relation between a gendered moral and the education of the body was not present only in school textbooks on hygiene and moral or in specialized French journals of the area of Physical Education. They were also visible in teacher training programs in Brazil. In the paper *"She cannot marry yet/ only*

after she graduates”: *body control and training of student teachers in the capital of Brazil (1920-1950)*, Fábio Souza analyses a series of normalizations present in the Brazilian capital between 1920 and 1950, that were largely constituted as ways to control the bodies of female teachers trained in that period, inclusive interfering on the private domain of these women’s lives.

One of the main techniques to educate the body that emerged still during the nineteenth century was gymnastics, an issue addressed by Iara Marina dos Anjos Bonifácio and Anderson da Cunha Baía. In *Writings of L. G. Kumlien and the evidence of several Swedish gymnastics*, Bonifácio and Baía analyze the dissemination of Swedish gymnastics based on Ludvig Gideon Kumlien’s actions as a promoter of proposals elaborated at the Central Gymnastics Institute, in Stockholm. Based on manuals written by Kumlien and on notes published in newspapers, the authors show how Swedish gymnastics acquired new outlines once it started circulating in French context, thus turning into a new method. Like gymnastics, outdoor games also occupied a prominent place in early-twentieth century France, especially in school. In the paper *Metz primary schools outdoors games (1919-1932)*, Laurent Grün analyzes primary schools in Metz, at the French-German border. The author demonstrates how a physical culture outdoors aimed to contribute to children’s moral and hygienic development, regardless of their gender or religion, developing a framework of pedagogical activities less strict than those traditionally used by school instructors.

Hygienic concerns and their relations to the education of the bodies, however, were not exclusive of textbooks written in the nineteenth and twentieth-century Europe and can also be found in Brazilian contexts since the eighteenth century, as Maria Cristina Rosa demonstrates. In the paper *Entertainment, illness and body education in the Vila Rica District (18th Century)*, the author uses a set of various civil and ecclesiastical sources to introduce the readers to discussions about amusements and illness, both understood as “two sides of the same coin”, whose major aim was the control of bodily excesses.

The circulation of handbooks was probably one of the most common strategies to advertise proposals for the education of the body. If gymnastics was their central theme during the nineteenth century, they slowly started giving more space to sports. Among the different methods that started to gain visibility in such literature, there was the Generalized Sports Physical Education method developed in France in mid-twentieth century, with great repercussions in Brazil. In *The production of Education Physique Sportive Généralisée in France: sports as a educational possibility*, Luciana Bicalho Cunha analyses the main authors and principles behind the creation of this method, indicating how it succeeded to establish games and sports as central elements in the teaching of physical education.

Discussions about the place of gymnastics and sports in physical education were vital from the mid-twentieth century on, and directly influenced curricula and teacher training programs in this field. This is demonstrated in the papers *Curricular changes from official documents in the training of physical education teachers in Uruguay in the 1960s and Between the “yard” and the “paper”*. *An analysis of curricular proposals for the training of physical education teachers, Argentina (1970-1989)*, written by Paola Dogliotti and Alejo Levoratti, respectively. Both authors use official sources to analyze and comprehend the constitution of physical education teacher training curricula in their countries. Dogliotti focuses on the debates to determine which set of knowledge should integrate the programs for physical education teacher training in Uruguay. On the other hand, Levoratti inquires how these debates influenced the development of the physical education teachers' identity in a period when tensions between research and teaching started to emerge.

Official documents, gymnastics manuals, and specialized journals are not the only artifacts of material culture used to disseminate norms regarding the body. As Eduardo Galak demonstrates, film production can contribute to spreading ethical and political aspects regarding the body, meaning they can also be used as sources for historical research about the education of the body. In *Light, camera ... Education of the body and character in Max Glücksmann's newsreels (1913-1915)*, the author analyses how documentaries produced by this filmmaker brought to light elements of an education of the body and the sensibilities in Argentina that permeated both schools and barracks. On the other hand, in the paper *Caxuxa comics and their messages to children: considerations about the child's body in Cirandinha magazine (1950s)*, Fernanda Theodoro Roveri e Maria Walburga dos Santos focus on other artifact of broad circulation: children's magazines. The authors analyse the magazine Cirandinha, an important tool for the “instruction and amusement” of Brazilian girls during the 1950s. They focus mainly on the comics telling the story of a black girl called Caxuxa, analyzing how her gestures and behaviors allowed the identification of a series of elements related to values and lessons promoted in other magazine sections. In a similar way, in *A dandy in the tropics: sport and body education in the chronicles of Paulo Barreto (João do Rio)*, André Mendes Capraro and Marcelo Moraes e Silva use another literary genre as a source to reflect on the education of the body: chronicles. Using mainly Paulo Barreto's writings, best known as João do Rio, the authors analyze how sports were used in these texts to represent different elements of Rio de Janeiro's society, shedding light on educational elements directly related to the body.

In the same way that official documents and gymnastics manuals were not the only way to diffuse certain values regarding the body, formal education was not the only space where people tried to intervene in the bodies to educate them. Dated from the first decades of the twentieth century, the scouts movement created by Baden-Powell found great reception in Brazil, as indicated by Andressa Barbosa de Farias Leandro in *On the path of the norte-rio-grandense education: the emergence of scout practices in the city of Natal in the early 20th century*. Based on a comprehensive set of sources, the author analyses the emergence of the scouts' movement in Natal, highlighting the sociability networks that allowed its consolidation as an educational model in this context.

We invite the readers to explore some of the processes of education of the body that were developed in the various historical times and places selected and analyzed by the 14 articles that compose this special issue.

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